

## Bluum Together: Episode 3- Rosie Santana

**Mike Caldwell:** Greetings and good day podcast listeners. Welcome back to another episode of *Bluum Together*. I am Mike Caldwell, and I am your host for this podcast. We're joined by Rosie Santana here in Boise, Idaho. Rosie, thanks for joining us today for your first, ever podcast it sounds like, so welcome.

**Rosie Santana:** Thank you, I'm glad to be here.

**Mike Caldwell:** We're excited to have you. We'll get into Rosie's background and experience and things like that, but she's a very well-respected reading and literacy specialist that is going to help contribute to this series on the science of reading in Idaho, and we're excited to have her. Before we jump into the focus for today, let's start with a story. Can you share a story that would, kind of, set the stage for what we're going to talk about today?

**Rosie Santana:** You know when I thought about 'story'. Gosh, there's so many... talk to any educator. We all have stories. It could be the kid, it could be why we became a teacher, why I'm so interested in a population of students who come to us speaking a language other than English, and I landed there when I thought about story. It has to do with my dad and growing up. So, he was born in the US but ended up long story short, being raised in Sonora in Mexico, and when he came to the US, he experienced some discrimination and some prejudice, and was very limited in what he could do, because he didn't speak the language. And so, as he started having all of us, there's 10 of us, he wanted us to do well, so he thought the answer to that was to ask us to speak English. Now he would speak to us in Spanish, but we would have to answer back in English, and it wasn't until I grew up that I realized that he had all the great intentions. But it's something that we should have held on to. But you know since then, I do speak Spanish. I tease people, they say, "where'd you get your Spanish?" And I say, "De la casa de la calle," which means 'from my house and from my neighborhood'. Right? Because we realized, even as kids, "hey, wait a second, Dad, we can, we can still be successful, having another language". And then what made me really think about that and I always share this story when I work with teachers is that idea of perception of someone who speaks another language. And it always takes me back to when I went to the store with my dad. He was purchasing something, and they didn't understand him, and I would interpret. And I remember being so little, but still watching that person look at my dad in a way that I thought, "real tiny Rosie, you think my dad's dumb! You don't know how smart my dad is, and because he's not speaking English, you have this perception of him already". And I carried that with me as I became a teacher, as I looked to make a difference in kids' lives and in the community.

**Mike Caldwell:** Wow, that was a great story. And that really does set the stage for what we're going to talk about today. So glad that we're starting these podcasts with stories because we get gems like that, that you just shared. So, thank you for that. Tell us a little bit about your background. You know, obviously, a lot of people in Idaho know you and you've been around the Northwest for a long time doing a lot of reading support, and teaching teachers how to teach reading. But elaborate on your experience and kind of what you're doing currently.

**Rosie Santana:** Yeah. Well, first and foremost, I'm a teacher of teachers. So, my heart is still a teacher's heart. When I left the classroom and was given that opportunity for a district that I work with to go to a district level, it was an easy yes because I was impacting the lives of 25 students. And I figured if I left the classroom to the teachers, I could impact more. Just like I held on to the story of my dad, I hold on to this little boy named Carlos sitting in the fifth row, and what could I do to impact him. And so, I look for

teachers who have their Carlos and I tried to help them make that impact for all the Carlos's. So, first and foremost a teacher. The second thing I think about in my journey is, I was given the opportunities that I took to put myself in places where I got to practice leadership, be proud of that leadership, and be proud of what my mission was going to be. And teachers are amazing. I mean, it is a calling, like we don't make a lot of money. That's not why we're here, and you know, it's so tough these days for teachers that I want them to remember it as I was, and I don't even think of it as moving up, but just getting more experience in the area of leading things. Cultivating a class that would provide teachers the skills and knowledge they need to implement and impact the Carlos's. It's really just about growth. And so, for me, doing that work, having that growth, led to working at various institutes. I worked at the Neuhaus Education Center in Texas, which is a recognized institute for teaching teachers how to teach students with dyslexia. It led me to actually start my own business, and I actually partner with Mountain West associates and with Marybeth Flachbart. We do some work around the state of Idaho, helping teachers address dyslexia. What it is, characteristics, how do you implement strategies to help students with dyslexia? And then, of course, the hard work as well, is working with English language learners. So, through that I have a little tiny LLC called Language and Literacy. And so, I do a lot of work around WIDA standards, ALPHA standards, helping districts understand, what are the language standards and what are the implications for the classroom.

**Mike Caldwell:** Yeah, well, I know you've been very busy out training teachers on dyslexia more recently and have some coming up. So, we appreciate finding some time to share some of your experience and knowledge today with us in this podcast. Let's kind of start with your expertise. One of your many expertise areas is in reaching ELL learners. Let's just define that. When we talk about ELL learners, what do we mean? And what does the typical Idaho classroom see in terms of kind of a profile of a student that would be classified as an ELL learner?

**Rosie Santana:** Well the technical term federally and within the state, is any student age 3 to 21 who is enrolled or preparing to be enrolled in an elementary or secondary school. We also look for those who are not born in the US whose primary language is not English. Native Americans, Alaskan natives, and US born whose primary language at home is not English. You know, I always have to be careful, because I want to make sure that my language doesn't come across, as it's a fallacy to come to us with another language. So, I want to talk about more, the impacts that situation has on learning and becoming an emergent bilingual and a multilingual.

**Mike Caldwell:** So, can you maybe expand on that a little bit, and maybe also talk about you know, when you go into schools, what are the most common backgrounds that you're seeing that students are coming in with in terms of mixed languages or English language learners?

**Rosie Santana:** So, it really does depend on the area. Sometimes, up in Northern Idaho, I might get a call that they've had their first English language learner. And so, you know, what does that mean? So, what are the implications of that federally? And what do we do to help our student become an emergent bilingual? And then we have places like... shout out to Blaine, an awesome district who just had an influx of Peruvians who have come in. You go to places like Caldwell, where still primarily students who speak Spanish, and primarily were born in the US as well. So, you know, they're coming from homes that's maybe second or third generation. But the primary language at home is still Spanish.

**Mike Caldwell:** So, we've talked a lot about the science of reading. When we talk about reading instruction for ELL learners, what's different and what's the same? When you go out and teach teachers

how to reach these students and to build their literacy, talk to us a little bit about that training and what you do and like, I said, what's different? What's the same?

**Rosie Santana:** Yeah. So, when working with English learners, a lot of people want to say, "it's different, right, Rosie? Because, like, we're a different Comunidad, it's going to be different from us." And they're surprised to hear that I tell them it's language based. So actually, it's going to be very much the same when we think of foundational skills. Our English learners, our multilingual learners, need to know the structure of the English language. They need to understand how phonemes work. They have phonemes in their language, it just might be a little different. They have sentences in their language. They put words together in their language. There's an Alaska group, I hope I get this right, I think it's the Nubian, who their language is very polysynthetic, different from English. English is very phoneme based. So, you put phonemes together, they blend together to make a word. In polysynthetic language of some of the Alaskan natives, it's morpheme base. So, morphemes come together and make a whole word. So, you might look at something and think that's a word, because in English we have word boundaries. That's a word, that's a word, that's a word. But for them, you look at this long sentence, long word, but it's really a long sentence, because it has to do with the nature of how their orthography is, how language works in their language. English learners need to have foundational skills. They need to know the alphabetic principle, what are the sounds and how they connect to the letters. They need to have vocabulary development, just like a lot of students do. Here's where it's different. They need academic language development. To tell you the truth, I say, all students need academic language development, because it's the language of school. When I work with the teachers, I call it 'the language of print' and our 'pen language', so that when they're speaking their beautiful home language, even if it's just regular, everyday English, or their native tongue, it is language that I always talk about, the language in which they are loved. That is their heart language. And that quote actually goes to Lisa Delpit, who wrote the book *Educating Other People's Children*. So how do we embrace that and see our students coming with these beautiful funds of language, and then help them bridge it to what we know about developing as a reader in the English language. So, foundational skills, yes. Those are important. Just like what we would for non EL's. Now, here's what's different. Many of these kids, they don't know the labels. They have the concept. They aren't blank slates. Nobody's coming as a blank slate. So, they have these concepts, they just don't know the English words for that. So, when we're thinking about Scarborough's rope, I don't know if you've heard of Scarborough's rope, but it's 2 strands in which we get to reading, One has to do with word level work, word recognition, and then the other set of strands has to do with language comprehension. We need more of that, giving them vocabulary words, giving them academic language. Compare and contrast, cause and effect, the way the story is going to lay out semantically. So, how they say it in that language because our students are coming to us with their oral processes that are a little different from English, and we can definitely embrace that and then bridge that. Let me give you an example.

**Mike Caldwell:** Yeah, please.

**Rosie Santana:** For example, in English, sometimes when a plate drops, we'll say "I dropped the plate." That doesn't exist in Spanish. We don't drop any plates, "El Plato Se Cayo". The plate dropped. That's how we translate it. So, as we're hearing English, we're like, "oh, okay, so we can make that right. We just don't say it that way". I was working with a group in Alaska and in some of their languages they don't have past tense, so if you translated it, it would sound like, "he ate already" or "he has eaten already" instead of "he ate". So just these ways that language is approached differently is valuable information to know.

**Mike Caldwell:** Yeah, that's helpful. We have referenced Scarborough's rope a couple different times. Can you maybe elaborate a little bit for our listeners? Like, you know, honestly, as a high school principal, I didn't spend a lot of time thinking about reading instruction. I should have, but I didn't. And so, some of these things are fairly new-ish to me. So, can you talk a little bit about what that is?

**Rosie Santana:** Yeah. So, it actually should be credit to the work in 1986 of Gough and Tunmer's work, who wrote the *Simple View of Reading*, which was just the basic idea that decoding and understanding of a passage is how kids become skilled readers. Hollis Scarborough then took that simple view of reading, and then added strands to it. So, for word recognition, we know, science of reading, 50 years, that kids need to have phonological awareness. We need to develop the alphabetic principle. Kids need to have that phoneme graphing map up. In other words, this sound is represented by this letter, in print. They need to develop what we call sight words, words that are what we call high frequency words, words that we find in early print. But also, the idea that every word that I have decoded then becomes encoded in my memory. Kilpatrick's calls this my orthographic memory, so that it is graphed for me. So basically, every word becomes a sight word. We're in your studio and if I would ask you to turn around and not read something, you couldn't help but read it, because it's already orthographically mapped. And that's what we're doing for our students. The top part of the rope has to do with language comprehension. Oral language is really important to the top part of the rope. What is the vocabulary that the students are bringing? A lot of kids are bringing their beautiful home language, but not necessarily the words. For example, they know rain, they know snow. Sleet? I don't know! I don't know that we use sleet in our home language. I don't know. Last time, my mom said, you know, "Oh, look at sleet out there!" She usually says rain. But do they know, precipitation? Do they know the words that they're going to encounter in print vocabulary? Do they understand how the author is going to lay those sentences out in an agreed upon English convention way in which we write? Do they understand the signal words that an author will use if they're writing narrative or expository? Do they understand, as engage readers, how the author is going to lay out a setting? The characters? The solution? Like in a secondary ELA class versus in a science class. Do they know when they open up that science book, what to already engage with? "Oh, yeah, this is expository. I'm going to find a title, headings, maybe some caption. I wonder what I'm going to learn. And how will that author lay that out for me to learn."

**Mike Caldwell:** Yeah, thank you for breaking that down, that's helpful. Help us visualize a classroom that you have gone in. You've done some instruction for teachers, and they have these, you know, mixed learners, some that are ELL learners and others that are not. What is happening in the classroom so that a teacher can reach those students differently and build that language comprehension while also building the skills for reading?

**Rosie Santana:** It actually starts with knowing your student and their data. So, Idaho gives a language standards assessment every year, and it's great if regular classroom teachers could take a look at that and say, "Hey, he's a 2 in speaking, or he's a 3." Well, what does that mean? It just means that at that point in time, he scored towards proficiency in the area of speaking. So, I'd start there. Start with their data. Just like we do in any classroom, right? How are the students coming in? And then the next thing I think about is, how am I going to use strategic partnering so that I have my language mentors or kids who have the better command of the English language partnered with some of my other students? I also think about, how do I create community? So, if I have a student who, maybe for this certain time as I'm doing other work is going to do some interpreting, I will purposely put another speaker there so translation needs to happen. So, we create a community so that we make sure our multilingual learners are not just like others. Like, "Oh, but they do this". Now, how do we make sure they're in the in the

classroom doing the work? And then I have to scaffold the work. Maybe they're going to draw pictures until language comes. What's great about this is "teacher, you know what? I have a lot to share. I just don't know how to say it in English," right?

**Mike Caldwell:** Right.

**Rosie Santana:** So it's not my thinking, it's a language thing. Until my language comes along, I pretty much can handle your science class. You know as much as these other kids who may be first introduced to the idea of photosynthesis. I'm sure that's not language they use in their homes. So, you know, how do we embrace that? And then create scaffolds for our multilingual learners. How do we find text in their original language just to get to comprehensible input as well.

**Mike Caldwell:** Wow. That's good stuff. In your view as you go out and work with schools and teachers across the state, how are we doing in this area? In classrooms in Idaho?

**Rosie Santana:** You know, I just, I think of the work that we do with Maria Puga, who's the Coordinator for the State of Idaho for English language learners. And she puts on a summer institute, it is always waiting list. Waiting list. We have educators who want to learn more, who want to sharpen up their skills in this area, so as far as interest and need, just judging by the offerings that come out of the State Department, there's always a waiting list. Because we can't accommodate all the people that want to come at the certain venue that we've chosen. That's one way, and then walking the halls and being in their schools. When I get invited to observe, it's like open door policy, they've embraced public practice. "Come in and watch." I was just in a district, and the teacher invited me in, and I got to see this teacher just embrace a program that he's using that teaches English. But at the same time, they're learning about creating an argument. With all the proper reasons and being ready for a rebuttal. And it's the standards. So, these kids aren't being denied the standards, they're being scaffolded up to the standards. So, he had them partner, he had them write. He pulled out the language, he said, "Did you notice how the author got into this argument? What were the words that the author used to start moving into his reasons? And this particular author, he used very sequential language; first, finally, moreover, and the kids were able to then look at the English language, and how it was being used by this author to support his argument.

**Mike Caldwell:** Isn't that great? When you get to go in into a classroom and just see the magic that happens with a teacher and how they're reaching students and building those skills. I love, I mean, that's one of my favorite things as a prior principal. When I was able to go in and see so many teachers do the great work that they do. And it sounds like you have similar experiences, being able to do what you do and go in to see these classrooms. That's really cool. So, let's kind of broaden it out a little bit and assuming that teachers are using the best practices inside the classroom that you're talking about, to reach ELA Learners, what are some of those key ingredients, kind of more school wide or district wide that you would recommend, that are critical kind of more systematically to reach those learners and to build their knowledge base and skills up?

**Rosie Santana:** It's great because I also get to work with leaders. And so sometimes I'll work with the teachers and afterwards, meet with leadership. And one of the things I look for is clarity and vision. So, what is your vision? Your clarity around the multi-lingual learners? Have you embraced? Has your staff embraced that we are all teachers of language? Language is inherent in the standards. You can't get away from language, I mean, think of one standard. Students will be able to compare and contrast

the differing viewpoints of an author's... compare and contrast is language. It carries language. There's certain words that I'm going to use that tell me, I'm comparing and contrasting. So, how do we embrace that we are all teachers of language? We have kids who need, I call them "L's and ALL's," and ALL's are academic language learners, native speakers of English, who they themselves need the academic language that's found in books. And then we have our multilinguals, whose primary language is not English, also need the English language development. So, what does that look like at your school when I say, "And your teachers embrace. We are all teachers of language." There should be some co-planning, some collaboration. There should be clarity about these are all our kids, not just the teacher down the hall, or they go to this at this period. But we are all here for these students, all our students, but we have an idea of the educational plan for that student when they cross the threshold of the door. I don't see this anymore, and I believe, and I hope that gone are the days where leadership used to say, "Oh, that's your area, you know. It's your area. You got it, and whatever you need". I think now they've understood that as an instructional leader, I need to think about how is the lesson designed for all my students, my multilinguals, my students who may be receiving special education. What's the tiered instruction? You know, all the good stuff that we've been learning. It still works. MTSS is for our English language learners as well. It's not a general population framework.

**Mike Caldwell:** MTSS?

**Rosie Santana:** Multi-tiered systems of support.

**Mike Caldwell:** Okay, do you want to elaborate on that? Sometimes we use acronyms and education, and we just throw them out there. It's like, okay, slow down. What is that?

**Rosie Santana:** Yeah, thank you for that. So, most schools will think about what is their design for learning, whether it's the English department, a math department, and elementary grades that they get this experience. It's driven by the standards. But students should know and be able to do. We think about, what do all students need? Tier one to meet the set of standards. What are those practices going to be? What is the curriculum? How are we going to assess that they are doing well, progressing along? How they did? And then there's a second layer we call tier 2. And that is, what do we do for those kids who, when we ask those questions, how are they doing? How are they progressing along? And they are not, or they need acceleration. Then we answer that with tier 2, maybe it's further support with smaller construction in the elementaries. Maybe it's an additional English class in the upper grades. And then we have a third tier where we work with those students who are maybe 2 or 3 years behind. And so how do we accelerate their learning? And we use specific data to diagnose and drive this because we don't have a lot of time so that we can target specifically those skills they need that did not help them meet proficiency when we go back to tier one.

**Mike Caldwell:** Thank you for elaborating on that. I just came from a conference, and I was reminded how often we use acronyms in education, just assuming that everybody knows what they all mean. So I wanted to pause, and at least elaborate on that. You've alluded to a couple other kind of, I think, best practices from a systems standpoint. You've mentioned the importance of data and looking at assessment and understanding where your students are. And you also mentioned collaboration. And I've talked to several different schools already on this topic and the idea of PLC's and collaboration really come up frequently. Can you maybe talk about one or both of those strategies as a school and how important that is?

**Rosie Santana:** Yeah. PLC's are professional learning communities, that's a really good opportunity for us to look at all our students. So if you look at any work, I'll take DuFour's work, who does this work on professional learning communities. And he does ask that first question, what should kids know and be able to do? Then what do we do if we don't? So when I'm working on the co-planning, or I've set a way for my teachers to look at their group of students. Then we decide what is the proper intervention for that, or we look at our own implementation. You know, how can I build in more language strategies? How did I address vocabulary? Were the kids using the vocabulary? Do I have an understanding how language works. So I'm going to concentrate here on English learners. Do I understand that there's 4 domains of language? Do I get it when I go to one of Rosie's workshops, and she talks about pen language, right? The written language, or she talks about print language, the language they're going to encounter in print. So do I have a specific design, a routine, a protocol, that I am intentional about teaching in my daily lessons. And then do I share that across with the person who is maybe providing some interventions or scaffold, or if I'm lucky enough to have an ELD teacher, English language development teacher. How do I co plan with them to ask them, what can I do more? Here are my plans. How would you augment these, or can you provide me feedback. I think that's how we can help each other as teachers, I think. Experts. What do we say? Steel, sharp, and steel? Yeah. So, it's an opportunity for them to not only grow by going to professional development but grow within their own setting by having these kinds of conversations with their peers.

**Mike Caldwell:** Absolutely, great. So, some closing thoughts, what advice would you give? Maybe starting with school leaders? What are some things that maybe you're seeing, or that, you know, are really effective, that you would just love every school leader to know and hear from you today?

**Rosie Santana:** Well, I really want to go back to that clarity. I need them to be clear about, what is their English language development program like? Can you articulate it? Can you tell me about it? And then the second thing I would look for is, are your teachers aware and have the skills and knowledge to scaffold for language instruction in your classroom?

**Mike Caldwell:** What about teachers? What advice or message would you want to send to any of our teachers that are listening?

**Rosie Santana:** Well, I said earlier that I just love teachers. I'm a teacher of teachers, and I know that those that are doing this really hard work. I'm just going to encourage you and everyone else. All the teachers that are listening to continue to embrace our multilingual learners, to see them as an asset. To take an asset approach, embrace them, embrace their cultures, not erase. Think of how you can develop their language as well as develop their sense of belonging as they become new Americans.

**Mike Caldwell:** I love that. And then maybe the last audience, parents. If we have parents listening, what advice would you give them?

**Rosie Santana:** They are so important; they are part of the keys to how our students progress at our schools. So, for the parents, if we had parents that were listening, and I'm looking right across at them, I would ask them to be advocates for their children. To visit the schools, become a part of the school community in collaboration with the teachers.

**Mike Caldwell:** Love that. Well, thank you so much Rosie for sharing your expertise and experience and wisdom to all of our listeners out there in today's episode of *Bluum Together*. This is part of our broader series on the science of reading, specifically the science of reading in Idaho. So, you have very much

contributed to our conversation, and we look forward to now going out into our schools and sharing some of the great things that are happening in our schools across the state of Idaho. So, if you are listening, stay tuned for our upcoming episodes where we get out and talk to education leaders across Idaho. So, with that, thanks again for listening and Rosie, thank you for your time today. I appreciate that.

**Rosie Santana:** Well, thank you for having me. Now I can officially check this off, I have done a podcast.

**Mike Caldwell:** You're official, yes. Absolutely. Well, thanks listeners and we will see you next time.